

North Durham Academy

High Street, Stanley, County Durham DH9 0TW

Inspection dates

23–24 May 2017

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Weak teaching, learning and assessment over time have resulted in pupils in key stages 3 and 4 failing to achieve as well as they should.
- Disadvantaged pupils' progress is weak. Their progress is well below that of other pupils nationally by the end of key stage 4.
- The progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and require additional support is also well below that of other pupils nationally.
- Leaders strive to ensure that the sixth form academic and vocational programmes of study meet the needs of students. However, overall students' progress is not good and therefore this phase of the school requires improvement.
- Prior to the arrival of the executive principal, leaders, including governors, had not tackled weaknesses in the quality of teaching or leadership to improve outcomes for pupils.
- Pupils' personal development, welfare and behaviour requires improvement. Pupils' self-confidence and understanding of how to be a good learner are not well developed.
- Where teaching does not engage pupils or teachers' expectations are low, a small minority of pupils display low-level poor behaviour.
- Attendance levels for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are too low. Some of these pupils have levels of persistent absence which are too high.

The school has the following strengths

- The recently appointed executive principal, well supported by the new directors, is beginning to tackle weaknesses with decisiveness and rigour. This is bringing noticeable improvements across the school.
- Regular support and guidance helps pupils develop their citizenship skills and to identify relevant careers, education and training routes. Consequently, in these respects pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Following clarification of their roles and responsibilities, senior and middle leaders have begun to take action to improve the quality of teaching and to check its impact. There are early signs that this is beginning to have a positive effect on pupils' progress.
- Trustees and the recently restructured local governing body are bringing improved levels of support and challenge to school leaders.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Urgently improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least good in order to improve progress for all groups of pupils, by:
 - planning and delivering teaching that is well matched to pupils' needs and that ensures gaps in learning are promptly addressed
 - having higher expectations for pupils' learning and behaviour based around the school's recently established assessment information and climate for learning policy
 - accelerating the progress of disadvantaged pupils and diminishing the differences between the progress of these pupils and other pupils nationally
 - improving opportunities for pupils to improve their English grammar, punctuation and spelling skills and to apply these across the curriculum
 - further developing the consistency of teaching in mathematics to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding
 - improving the deployment of curriculum support workers so that their impact upon pupils' learning is improved
 - improve the quality of questioning and feedback to address promptly pupils' misconceptions and gaps in learning
 - making more effective use of available assessment and planning information for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Improve the quality of leadership, by:
 - implementing middle leaders' planned actions to rapidly improve pupils' progress, particularly in English and mathematics, and regularly checking for impact
 - improving the planning, monitoring and evaluation of pupil premium spending and funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to ensure that their progress improves
 - ensuring that support and induction is provided to newly appointed assistant directors to ensure that these leaders can make a prompt impact.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare, by:
 - improving pupils' understanding of what it means to be a successful, self-confident learner
 - increasing attendance levels and reducing persistent absence for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Improve students' progress on academic courses in the sixth form, to ensure that it at

least matches or exceeds national averages.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Until the recent changes to leadership, including the restructure of leadership, the appointment of the executive principal and strengthening of the local governing body, leaders have not addressed the weaknesses in teaching and the resulting weak pupil outcomes robustly enough.
- The executive principal, who began supporting the school in December 2016, and formally took up post in March 2017, has promptly identified the main priorities for improving the school. Along with other senior leaders both within the school and across the academy trust, he is taking effective action. This is beginning to improve pupils' behaviour and the quality of teaching and leadership across the school. For example, systems for checking the quality of teaching, measuring and tracking pupils' progress and improving pupils' behaviour are showing early signs of impact. The overwhelming majority of staff agree that they have a clear understanding of the goals the school aims to achieve and are motivated to work towards these objectives.
- The trust's director for data and information technology has improved the quality of assessment and tracking of pupils' progress. Staff training and collaborative working alongside staff in Consett Academy are helping most staff to make accurate assessments and use this tracking system effectively. As a result, more accurate pupil progress information is now available for teachers to use for planning. In addition, leaders, including governors, can check more readily where pupils' progress needs to accelerate.
- Middle leaders now have greater clarity of their roles and understand better the priorities for improvement in their areas of responsibility. They have clear plans in place to improve pupils' outcomes. Regular checks are beginning to help them to identify the impact of their actions. There is early evidence that this is beginning to improve teachers' planning and approaches to assessment.
- The director for data and information technology is currently providing leadership for mathematics on an interim basis. This has strengthened leadership of a subject where pupils' outcomes have been weak. Plans are in place to appoint a permanent leader to start in September 2017.
- Pupils' outcomes in English have been too weak over time. The leader for English supported by guidance from the new executive principal now has a clearer understanding of the changes required to secure the necessary improvements. He is benefiting from collaborative working with the leader for English in Consett Academy. It is too early to determine if this support is improving pupils' outcomes sufficiently.
- The special educational needs coordinator has taken action to ensure effective support is in place for pupils with an education, health and care plan, who require high levels of provision to overcome barriers to learning. As a result, these pupils succeed well and their progress is similar to that of others nationally. However, pupils identified as requiring additional support for their special educational needs do not make enough progress and their attendance levels are too low. Spending of the additional special educational needs funding has, therefore, had a variable impact.

- Leaders' spending of pupil premium as a means to improving disadvantaged pupils' progress has been ineffective. The differences between disadvantaged pupils' progress and that of other pupils nationally are not diminishing and in 2016, their progress was significantly below that of others by the end of key stage 4. Current leaders, including governors, have identified this concern. They have recently completed an internal review of the spending of pupil premium.
- Leaders' use of the additional funding to help Year 7 pupils catch up in literacy and numeracy has had a positive impact. The vast majority of pupils who are eligible for this support make accelerated progress in English and mathematics and their attendance is good.
- The vice-principal with responsibility for the curriculum plans and reviews the curriculum effectively. This ensures that the curriculum provides an appropriate offer of academic and vocational programmes. Middle leaders have recently developed planning which helps deliver this curriculum offer. Some of this planning and the related assessments, including in English and mathematics, are not fully embedded across the school. Consequently, the impact on pupils' outcomes are not yet evident. Pupils have access to a wide range of extra-curricular activities and residential visits, which enrich the curriculum well.
- Work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is carefully matched to the needs of pupils. Discussions with pupils demonstrate that they have respect and tolerance for people who come from different backgrounds to themselves. Pupils have a good understanding of the rule of law and democracy. They also receive regular advice about careers, education and training. As a result, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Improved systems to manage the performance of staff are in place. Governors ensure that pay progression is linked to staff achieving agreed objectives. Staff benefit from a range of training, including working in collaboration with Consett Academy staff, which is starting to enhance their leadership and teaching skills.
- Well-planned support is in place for teachers who are new to the profession. Leaders are also putting in place training for strong teachers to teach subjects where the school has found it difficult to recruit staff, such as in mathematics. This is helping leaders to address some of the challenges it has faced in relation to recruiting and retaining teachers.
- Leaders and staff have benefited from guidance and development provided by the local authority. This is starting to develop leaders' skills in checking for improvements in the quality of teaching and systems for assessing pupils' progress. Increasing opportunities for collaborative working across the trust are helping the development of curriculum design, teaching, learning and assessment and leadership skills. A national leader for education is supporting the school. This is a recent arrangement; therefore, it is too early to determine its impact.

Governance of the school

- Previous challenge and support from trustees and governors had not secured the required improvements identified at the previous inspection. However, both the trustee board and the local governing body now provide effective strategic leadership. The

trustee board has taken robust action recently to strengthen leadership, including governance. The recently appointed chair of the governing body brings a wealth of expertise, which has further added to the quality of support and challenge.

- The trustee board has responded promptly to the disappointing 2016 key stage 4 results. Trustees have taken effective action to reshape the leadership arrangements. As a result, the leadership structure, including an executive principal, is better placed to drive forward the required improvements. Trustees and governors recognise that the significant changes created by the leadership restructure will require carefully planned induction and training for leaders new to these roles, several of whom are not yet appointed. Trustees, governors and senior leaders are making improved use of the collaborative opportunities provided from the school being part of the trust.
- The restructured local governing body, including the chair of the local governing body, is providing increased levels of support and challenge to leaders. Governors are well informed about the school's priorities. Through their link-governor roles, they now have a better understanding of aspects of the school such as the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and safeguarding.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have established a culture of safeguarding. They complete careful safeguarding checks for all staff, governors and volunteers. The safeguarding policy meets the current national requirements and staff understand the school's procedures and their own responsibilities. Staff and governors receive regular and appropriate training so they know how to keep pupils safe, including training about how to protect pupils from radicalisation and extremism. Leaders and staff work effectively with other agencies and parents to ensure that they meet the needs of pupils and families who may be vulnerable. The governor recently responsible for safeguarding is promptly gaining an understanding of policy and practice across the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- The quality of teaching over time has been weak and this is why pupils' outcomes by the end of Year 11 are inadequate.
- The teaching of English is inadequate and too often middle-attaining and lower-attaining pupils are making limited progress. The most able pupils generally respond well to teaching and feedback. As a result, there is evidence that these pupils make stronger progress.
- Some teachers do not ensure that pupils apply English grammar, punctuation and spelling skills in other subjects effectively. As a result, the quality of pupils' handwriting, presentation and the accuracy of spelling, including key vocabulary, are weak across other subjects.
- Teaching of mathematics is inadequate. Some teachers make effective use of their strong subject knowledge and clear expectations to move pupils' learning forward promptly. However, too often teaching does little to engage the pupils and the learning

is poorly planned to meet pupils' needs. As a result, pupils have little understanding of how to improve their work and teaching does not build effectively on their prior knowledge.

- Curriculum support workers are supportive of pupils' behaviour in lessons, provide praise and encourage pupils to engage with their work. However, their impact upon pupils' learning is not strong enough.
- Recent improvements to assessment approaches and systems are starting to help teachers improve their understanding of the expectations of progress and attainment in the subjects that they teach. Opportunities to arrive at shared assessment judgements in collaboration with staff in Consett Academy are enabling teachers to make more accurate assessments about pupils' work.
- While support plans are in place for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and require additional support, these are used to varying effect. As a result, the overall progress of these pupils is weak.
- Improved identification of what pupils need to learn next and improved subject planning is beginning to help teachers to better match lessons to pupils' needs. However, too often, work is too easy and repeats learning pupils have already grasped. Sometimes work is too hard, causing pupils to struggle.
- Teaching is usually characterised by effective use of probing questioning which is deepening pupils' learning. However, there are too many occasions when questioning is not well targeted to check or extend pupils' learning.
- Relationships in lessons are in the main positive. Most teachers make effective use of the school's policies to create a positive learning climate. Where teachers' expectations for learning and behaviour are clear, pupils are more engaged with learning.
- The use of homework to improve learning is variable. Leaders and staff recognise that there is more to be done to make this a valuable aspect of pupils' learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement. Sometimes pupils lack self-confidence in lessons to either share their views with the class or when working in small groups. Some pupils are not entirely clear about what they need to achieve as learners. As a result, not enough pupils understand fully how to achieve well.
- Strong systems are in place to support pupils' social and emotional well-being. Pupils who require greater levels of support with their social and emotional needs are provided with effective additional provision. As a result, they are settled in school and generally engage well with their learning. Carefully planned steps support pupils who have accessed additional nurture provision to make a successful transition back into mainstream classes.
- Regular support sessions help pupils with their personal development and knowing how to stay safe, including online. Pupils receive useful advice during these sessions and at

careers events. Such impartial advice helps pupils make appropriate choices about careers, training or education. As a result, almost all pupils successfully transfer to one of these routes at the end of Year 11.

- Pupils understand the different forms of bullying, including bullying online and by mobile phone. While they report that incidents do occur, most pupils, although not all, believe that these are well addressed by staff. School records show that leaders take any incidents of bullying seriously and they are dealt with promptly and appropriately.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. In most lessons, pupils are well behaved and ready to learn. However, where teachers' expectations are not clear enough or the work is not well matched to their needs, some pupils' interest wanes. This results in less positive behaviour by a minority of pupils.
- During breaktimes and lunchtimes, pupils generally behave well and socialise suitably. They move around the school in a sensible fashion and the school is an orderly environment.
- Overall attendance rates are very close to those found nationally. However, despite the range of measures taken by leaders and staff, levels of attendance for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are too low and some of these pupils have high levels of persistent absence.
- Some parents responding to the online questionnaire, Parent View, raised concerns about pupils' behaviour and bullying. Leaders monitor behaviour and bullying carefully. They have recently revised their strategies to help pupils to improve their behaviour and to provide specific support for individuals. There is emerging evidence that these approaches are starting to have a positive impact on improving behaviour in school.
- Pupils attending off-site alternative provision receive appropriate support to help them with their personal development, behaviour and welfare. Leaders check pupils' attendance thoroughly, and overall attendance levels for these pupils is strong. Pupils are completing a range of vocational and academic programmes suited to their needs.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Pupils' progress from their starting points in key stage 3 to the end of key stage 4 has been too slow, particularly in English and mathematics. The school's current pupil progress information and pupils' books show some slight improvements in pupils' progress in Year 11, following targeted support since January 2017. However, current pupils' progress in mathematics and particularly in English remains weak.
- Despite the good careers advice and guidance provided, the low levels of attainment achieved by pupils at the end of Year 11 mean that not enough pupils are academically ready for their next stage of education.
- Progress of disadvantaged pupils is weak. The differences between the progress made by disadvantaged pupils, particularly those who are middle ability, and other pupils nationally are too wide. As a result, too many disadvantaged pupils' attainment is below that of other pupils nationally at the end of Year 11. Current leaders and governors are reviewing the spending of the additional funding to support these pupils.

They have already taken action to target support where there is particular underachievement in the current Year 11.

- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make variable progress. Those who have education, care and health plans make progress broadly in line with that found nationally. However, those who require additional support for their special educational needs and/or disabilities are making progress which is significantly below that found nationally. This is because available information about their learning needs has not been used consistently enough.
- In 2016, the most able pupils made generally similar progress in all subjects to other pupils nationally by the end of key stage 4. Pupils' books and the school's pupil progress information show that most-able pupils' progress remains similar to previous results.
- Effective support in small groups helps Year 7 pupils who need to catch up with their English and mathematics accelerate their progress. Consequently, the majority of these pupils improve their levels of attainment and their work is closer to the standards expected for their age.
- Leaders review carefully the progress of pupils attending the alternative provision. In the main, these pupils progress well in the programmes they are completing. However, their progress in academic subjects such as English and mathematics is generally not as strong as that of other pupils.
- The pupils who attend the language resource base are included in the mainstream classes. Their progress does not differ from that of the other pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities within the school.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- The number of students in the sixth form is small. Nevertheless, leaders strive to ensure a suitable range of academic and vocational study programmes is available to meet the needs of students.
- Students' progress in academic subjects is variable and, therefore, this aspect of the school requires improvement. In 2016, students' progress in A-level subjects was broadly in line with national averages. However, in no subject was students' overall progress better than the national average. Furthermore, students' progress in art and design in 2016 was significantly below that found nationally. Leaders have recently taken steps to improve the teaching of this subject. Current students are now on a more appropriate pathway to progress well.
- Students' progress on vocational routes is also broadly in line with that found nationally. However, students make better progress than that found nationally in health studies. Overall, current students' progress information indicates that students continue to make stronger progress in vocational subjects than academic ones.
- Generally, students receive effective and sometimes strong teaching, which is well planned. Most teachers use questioning and modelling to move students' learning forward well. However, some students receive limited feedback and they are less sure about how to improve their work or what their targets for improvement are.

- Opportunities for work experience and work based learning contribute effectively to the programmes of study. The school has strong links with local industry and education providers. These experiences, combined with effective careers education, independent advice and guidance, help students to be well placed to make choices about their destinations following their time in sixth form. As a result, almost all students successfully make this step. There are increasing proportions of students entering into higher education routes to university.
- Retention of students at the school between Year 12 and Year 13 has been variable. Following a dip in the previous year, retention rates rose again in 2016 with almost all students continuing from Year 12 into Year 13. This indicates that students are making improved programme choices when entering Year 12.
- Some students have not successfully achieved GCSEs at A* to C grade in mathematics and English prior to entering the sixth form. Appropriate development of English and mathematical skills is in place to support those who have not achieved these qualifications. As a result, more students are achieving these qualifications by the time they leave the sixth form. However, there are still a significant minority of students who do not.
- Overall, students are very positive about their sixth-form experience with respect to both the programmes of study on offer and the personal development, welfare and guidance provided. They find the behaviour of other students to be good and relationships positive. Students value the weekly student support sessions, which provide guidance on careers, further education, examination preparation and aspects of emotional and physical well-being. Consequently, attendance levels are high in the sixth form.
- Leaders and governors review the impact of the sixth form in relation to the outcomes and destinations of sixth-form students. Leaders take prompt action to make improvements where needed. For example, they have clear plans to improve the academic and vocational offers by focusing certain programmes at either the North Durham or Consett school sites.

School details

Unique reference number	136745
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10032008

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,116
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	110
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Christine Warren
Principal	Kevin Reynolds (Executive Principal)
Telephone number	01207 292180
Website	www.northdurhamacademy.co.uk
Email address	info@ndacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	June 2013

Information about this school

- North Durham Academy is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The school is part of The New College Durham Academies Trust. Since March 2017 the school has had an executive principal who provides leadership across the two schools in the trust, North Durham Academy and Consett Academy.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium funding is well above that found nationally.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities

requiring additional school support is similar to that found nationally.

- The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan is above that found nationally. This is partly because the school has a language resource base on site. The pupils who attend the base are fully integrated into the mainstream lessons.
- At the time of the inspection, no Year 10 pupils were on site. Leaders' reported that they were all engaged in work experience.
- Twenty-two students are educated off site, either full time or part time, at five different providers. Delta Independent School, Catch 22 provision, Stepping Stones, GAP, the Bridge and Education Plus.
- The school receives support from The New College Durham Academies Trust, Durham local authority and a national leader for education.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' progress by the end of Year 11.
- The school meets the criteria for the government's coasting school definition.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning in a range of 23 lessons and part-lessons. The executive principal joined the lead inspector for two observations of learning.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour around school and reviewed the school's promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The inspectors observed pupils in the playground and during lunchtime.
- The inspectors held meetings with the executive principal, the director for data and information technology, the vice-principal with responsibility for curriculum, middle leaders and the leader for the sixth form, a representative group of teachers, as well as the special educational needs coordinator. The lead inspector met with four governors, including the chair of the local governing body.
- Two groups of pupils and a group of sixth-form students discussed their opinions about the school and their learning with the inspectors.
- Inspectors took account of the 164 responses to Ofsted's online parent survey, Parent View. Inspectors considered the 70 responses to staff questionnaires and the 198 responses to the pupil questionnaire.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including minutes from meetings of the trustees and the local governing body, information about pupils' achievement, the school's evaluation of its own performance and its development plans. Reviews were made of behaviour and attendance records and information relating to safeguarding. The inspectors scrutinised some pupils' work in their books.

Inspection team

Michael Reeves, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Mike Tull	Her Majesty's Inspector
Joanne Owens	Ofsted Inspector
David Penny	Ofsted Inspector
Catherine Garrett	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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